

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1349

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USNATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USLO PEKING

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, PARM, MBFR, UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV INTERVIEW WITH VORWAERTS- MILITARY

ASPECTS

REF: BONN 8225(NOTAL)

SUMMARY. SOVIET PRESS MAY 4 CARRIES TEXT OF BREZHNEV
INTERVIEW WITH JOURNAL VORWAERTS (ASSUME ADDRESSEES HAVE
FBIS TEXT). MOST NOTABLE ELEMENTS OF MILITARY PORTION
OF INTERVIEW DEAL WITH MBFR (WHERE BREZHNEV REPEATS
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SOVIET POSITION THAT EACH SIDE HAS ROUGHLY 980,000
SERVICEMEN IN CENTRAL EUROPE) AND CIVIL DEFENSE (WHERE
BREZHNEV DERIDES WESTERN CONCERN OVER INTENTIONS OF
SOVIET PROGRAM). THE INTERVIEW SUGGESTS THAT DISARMAMENT
INITIATIVES WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN BREZHNEV'S
CONVERSATIONS IN BONN. END SUMMARY.

1. OVERALL THE INTERVIEW CONVEYS AN IMPRESSION OF SOVIET SELF-CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION TO PUSH DISARMAMENT PROGRAMS ALREADY MADE PUBLIC. BREZHNEV FORCEFULLY REJECTS WESTERN CHARGES OF SOVIET AGGRESSIVENESS AND WARNINGS ABOUT THE "SOVIET MILITARY THREAT," THUS CONTINUING SOVIET EFFORTS TO PHRASE THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE IN ITS OWN TERMS. THIS APPROACH IS PARTICULARLY STRIKING IN BREZHNEV'S CATEGORICAL ASSERTION THAT PARITY EXISTS IN CENTRAL EUROPE. IT IS MOST LUDICROUS WHEN BREZHNEV DESCRIBES THE NEUTRON WEAPON AS THE LATEST WESTERN AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE TO SOVIET PEACEFULNESS, COMPARING IT WITH WESTERN INTERVENTION AFTER THE REVOLUTION, APPEASEMENT AT MUNICH, AND THE COLD WAR (WHICH, ACCORDING TO LEONID IL'ICH "THE WEST BEGAN AGAINST US").

2. THE MOST NOTABLE ELEMENTS OF BREZHNEV'S LONG EXPOSITION OF SOVIET MILITARY AND ARMS CONTROL POLICIES STRIKE US AS FOLLOWS:

--MBFR: BREZHNEV CHARACTERIZES THE CURRENT MILITARY BALANCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE AS ONE OF "APPROXIMATE EQUILIBRIUM," NOTING THAT THE DATA TABLED BY EAST AND WEST IN VIENNA INDICATE THAT THERE IS NOT "DISPROPORTION" BUT APPROXIMATE NUMERICAL EQUALITY IN SERVICEMEN IN CENTRAL EUROPE, WITH "980,000 PLUS A FEW THOUSANDS" ON BOTH SIDES. LATER IN THE INTERVIEW, BREZHNEV ASSERTS

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THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS PREPARED FOR FORCE REDUCTIONS OF 5, 10, 20 OR EVEN 50 PERCENT IN MBFR NEGOTIATIONS, AS LONG AS THE CURRENT EQUILIBRIUM IS MAINTAINED;

--CIVIL DEFENSE: BREZHNEV DENIES ANY SOVIET INTEREST IN LAUNCHING A "FIRST STRIKE," CLAIMING THAT IN LIGHT OF "BITTER EXPERIENCE" WITH PAST AGGRESSION THE SOVIETS ARE MERELY TAKING MEASURES TO PROTECT THEIR POPULATION IN CASE OF WAR. BREZHNEV RIDICULES THOSE IN THE WEST WHO, HE SAYS, SPEAK OF THE "ACCEPTABILITY" OF THE DEATH OF 10 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IN A NUCLEAR WAR;

--CHINA: BREZHNEV DOES NOT DIRECTLY MENTION CHINA BUT IN A CLEAR REFERENCE TO PEKING WARNS THAT THE USSR IS CAPABLE OF REPELLING AGGRESSION "IN THE WEST OR IN THE EAST";

--NEUTRON WEAPON: BREZHNEV DOES NOT REFER DIRECTLY TO THE RB/ER WEAPON EXCEPT IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT CITED ABOVE. AT ANOTHER POINT, HE MAKES AN INDIRECT REFERENCE TO THE RB/ER WEAPON (AS WELL AS OTHER WEAPONS UNDER DEVELOPMENT) WHEN HE STATES THAT THE "SOVIET UNION

ALWAYS HAS FOUND AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL FIND APPROPRIATE
RESPONSES TO ANY MILITARY CHALLENGE;"

--SOVIET NAVY: BREZHNEV JUSTIFIES SOVIET ACQUISITION
OF A "GLOBAL FLEET" AS REQUIRED BY THE LONG SOVIET
MARITIME FRONTIER. HE CLAIMS THAT THE SOVIET FAILURE
TO CONSTRUCT "ASSAULT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS" DEMONSTRATES
THE "DEFENSIVE" CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET NAVY.
3. BREZHNEV ALSO REITERATES SEVERAL FAMILIAR THEMES SUCH
AS: THE EXISTENCE OF RECOGNIZED PARITY BETWEEN SOVIET

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AND U.S. STRATEGIC FORCES; THE ABSENCE OF ANY SOVIET
INTENTION TO ATTACK ANYONE; THE JUSTIFICATION OF SOVIET
DEFENSIVE MEASURES IN THE FACE OF THE USSR'S "GEOGRAPHICAL
SITUATION" (I.E., THE THREAT FROM CHINA), HISTORICAL
WESTERN AGGRESSIVENESS, AND THE PRESENCE OF HOSTILE US
BASES ENCIRCLING THE SOVIET UNION; AND THE SOVIET
PROPOSALS ON NONFIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, NO EXPANSION
OF MILITARY ALLIANCES, AND A SIZE LIMIT ON MILITARY
MANEUVERS.

4. COMMENT: THE INTERVIEW SUGGESTS THAT SOVIET DIS-

ARMAMENT PROPOSALS WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN
BREZHNEV'S CONVERSATIONS IN BONN. THE INTERVIEW'S
COMBINATION OF SELF-SERVING RHETORIC AND HISTORICAL
JUSTIFICATION FOR SOVIET CONCERN OVER FOREIGN AGGRESSION
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PROBABLY ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE APPROACH TO BE TAKEN
IN BONN, WHERE BREZHNEV WILL PROBABLY PRESS HARD ON THE
NEUTRON WEAPON. BREZHNEV'S CLAIM OF NUMERICAL EQUALITY
IN CENTRAL EUROPE SUGGESTS SOVIET DETERMINATION TO
STICK WITH THEIR FIGURES IN THE VIENNA TALKS. TOON

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